

During my first years in Washington, I think many of us in the administration took it for granted that the Russians, like ourselves, considered it unthinkable that the United States would launch a first strike against them. But the more experience I had with Soviet leaders and other heads of state who knew them, the more I began to realize that many Soviet officials feared us not only as adversaries but as potential aggressors who might hurl nuclear weapons at them in a first strike; because of this, and perhaps because of a sense of insecurity and paranoia with roots reaching back to the

invasions of Russia by Napoleon and Hitler, they had aimed a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons at us.

Well, if that was the case, I was even more anxious to get a top Soviet leader in a room alone and try to convince him we had no designs on the Soviet Union and Russians had nothing to fear from us.

Less than a week before the Soviets walked out of the INF talks in Geneva in November 1983, I decided to make another attempt at communicating with Yuri Andropov outside the normal diplomatic channels. As I remarked in my diary after a meeting with George Shultz at which we agreed to create a small group within the National Security Planning Group with the goal of opening new channels to the Kremlin,

I feel the Soviets are so defense minded, so paranoid about being attacked that without being in any way soft on them, we ought to tell them no one here has any intention of doing anything like that. What have they got that anyone would want? George is going on ABC right after its big nuclear bomb film Sunday night. It shows why we must keep on doing what we're doing.

